

## **Environmental Roundtable Meeting Notes**

**May 10, 2000**

Present: Paul Beaudette, Gregg Gerritt, Chris Modisette, Jane Sherman, Harold Ward, Scott Wolf, Topher Hamblett, Linda Green, Alicia Lehrer, Susan Arrants  
DEM staff: Fred Vincent, Mal Grant, Bob Ballou, Alicia Good, Terry Gray, Tom Getz, Ken Ayars, Janet Keller, Russ Chateauneuf, Dean Albro, Rich Ribb, Mickie Musselman

### **Old Business**

The Director noted the newsletter covered several topics on the agenda, and in the interest of efficiency, directed the participants to this document. If this material needed further clarification he would answer any questions on a topic.

Alicia Good announced the availability of Clean Water Bond information. The Department mailed this material to cities and towns describing the benefits of past bond programs.

### **Permit Streamlining**

There is an update on this issue in the newsletter. The Audubon Society had asked for information on outreach and public participation. Tom Getz mentioned the DEM web site contains meeting information and a schedule of future meetings.

### **I/M update**

This issue is also covered in the newsletter. There is a bill in the legislature that would expand the I/M Program to cover heavy-duty diesel vehicles. The inspections of these vehicles will be on-road, and eventually some trucks will go to their own inspection stations.

### **Legislation**

Bob Ballou said there are more than 200 bills of interest to DEM, and briefly reviewed the status of some of them. A DEM reorganization bill has been introduced in the Senate. The Coastal Habitat Restoration bill has a good chance of passage. There is a lobster license control bill, and one to license out-of-state fishermen in Rhode Island quota fisheries. Several bills have been submitted regarding solid waste. One bill sets uniform appeal periods for AAD. There is a wetlands mitigation bill, one on carbon sequestration, and a public trust bill.

Jane Sherman asked about re-classifying waste oil from hazardous waste to special waste. It was noted that there is a bill that would do just that, and thereby help to facilitate the recycling of waste oil.

Scott Wolf asked if DEM is opposed to the bill that would create a separate Department of Agriculture. The Director thought one agency should be responsible for all natural resource issues including agriculture. He pointed to the value of farms as open space, as well as the value of natural resource based industries, and suggested that one Department can best reconcile competing interests and concerns regarding agriculture issues.

Harold Ward suggested posting some of the bills on the Department website with information concerning the Department's position on the bill. Since DEM is tracking over 200, it is not practical to put all of them on the web. Bob Ballou noted that it would be difficult to keep the web site updated, especially for things such as hearings that are scheduled on short notice. Paul Beaudette suggested a link to the Secretary of State's web page and the Director agreed that would be a good solution.

## **New Business**

### **Environmental Lead**

The Director said the Department is developing new tools to respond more quickly to violations. Dean Albro said he has a draft notice of non-compliance and a draft immediate compliance order. The immediate compliance order provides for a hearing within 24 hours. These documents will be ready soon. Janet Keller noted that the Department has applied for a small grant to conduct a door-to-door information campaign on lead paint removal. Jane Sherman suggested giving the packet of information to painting contractors. The Director said he has discussed this with RIBA and the group may be willing to fund some outreach. Linda Green suggested training real estate agents, and Jane Sherman asked if the information could be made available in Spanish as well as English.

### **Watersheds**

Scott Millar explained the major thrust of the watersheds program. In the South County area there are four established watershed groups, and the issues are pretty well defined. He also noted that DEM is integrating its efforts in the area through the Smart Growth, and Vision 2000 programs. In addition he mentioned that three TMDLs evaluations are underway in that watershed.

In the Woonasquatucket River watershed the issues are not as well defined. There are CSO problems, heavy industrial uses (some abandoned contaminated sites), and the issues are more restorative. Jane Sherman, Eugenia Marks, and the EPA River Navigator, Johanna Hunter, are working together to define priorities. The Director said DOT is working with DEM on stormwater problems. Jane Sherman said the Allendale Dam has not been well maintained and dioxins from behind the dam have been moving downstream.

### **Mercury Action Plan**

DEM is seeking to establish voluntary mercury action plans from sources of mercury in RI. Paul Beaudette asked if there were any efforts to collect items such as mercury thermometers. The Director explained that the Mercury Action Plan strategy is broad and covers such things. Barbara Morin said DEM is considering a mercury-recycling program.

### **Stormwater**

The Phase II Stormwater Regulations deal with stormwater on a watershed basis and tie in with TMDLs. Angelo Liberti said DEM is developing guidance for communities to develop stormwater plans over the next two years. Greg Gerritt asked about incentives for facilities with large parking lots to reduce runoff.

Paul Beaudette asked about energy use, sustainability, and the need to reduce energy consumption. The Director said DEM is working on a Greenhouse Gas Action Plan with Harold Ward at Brown University and will be developing strategies. He said energy efficiency and conservation play a role in reducing greenhouse gases as well as overall air quality. Housing design and energy consumption tie in with the building code issues that are being worked on by Grow Smart. Chris Modisette mentioned he was recently at a meeting in New Hampshire where they discussed managing forests for sustainability.

### **Ladd School**

Paul Baudette asked what is being done to protect wetlands on this site and how development will be controlled. The Director explained that EDC proposed a job-training center at the site, an office park, and a golf course. EDC is working with the Audubon Society and the Nature Conservancy on conservation easements and he noted this is an opportunity to incorporate energy conservation, stormwater reuse and innovative septic systems into the project design. Harold Ward said the Pawcatuck Watershed Committee has been asked to develop an advisory group. The Director said the buildout projection increases the historic water use, and also noted that Massachusetts has guidelines on designing golf courses for low impact.

### **Ozone Days**

The newsletter covers this topic. Barbara Morin added that the Health Department issues health alerts, RIPTA has incentives to get people to reduce use of automobiles and save energy, and there are web sites that contain ozone maps. Jane Sherman asked if RIPTA numbers show that ridership is up on ozone days, and Barbara responded that there is some increase. Scott Wolf mentioned that skeptics question our efforts to reduce vehicular emissions because ozone is transported here from New York and New Jersey. Barbara acknowledged that ozone is a regional problem but that we contribute to increased ozone levels in Massachusetts and Maine.

### **Regulatory Update**

There was a handout on the regulatory agenda. The waste management program is interested in revising the hazardous waste regulations and in updating the program authorization from EPA. Dean Albrow said the changes in the penalty regulations would be effective May 15. This action will streamline the number of penalty matrices from 8 to 4. Jane Sherman asked about the Department policy on SEP's to offset penalties. Dean said the Department is revising the policy and is developing a SEP bank.

### **Enforcement Statistics**

DEM has begun to post information on the department's website on enforcement actions, and cases resolved. Terry Gray explained the Department is setting up a stakeholder group to discuss enforcement issues such as the Enforcement Policy and the inspection protocol. The Director said that historically, the more serious a violation the longer it took to notify the violator. DEM is now working on a notification letter that will allow a person to begin to remedy the problem prior to formal enforcement actions.

**Mediation Program**

DEM has instituted a mediation process to resolve environmental problems. This is an option to resolve enforcement cases, especially in the wetlands and ISDS programs. Dean Albro said a solid waste violation on residential property is being mediated.

**Narragansett Bay Summit**

The Director said there is serious interest in the General Assembly for follow-up to the Bay Summit. Rich Ribb said a summary report would be out in a few weeks and a full report with all the briefing papers would be completed this summer. The Director said the Dredge Materials Management Plan is proceeding and he expects results soon. The marina dredging material should be resolved separately from the Providence River dredging issue because of the disparities in scale. In addition, dredge material from marinas may present some beneficial reuse options.

At the present time, data concerning Narragansett Bay is not well coordinated. As a result of this summit, the Coastal Institute has been mentioned as a repository for data collection and data management efforts concerning the bay.

**Budget**

The supplemental budget contains full funding for permit streamlining hardware. Funding for staffing at DEM is moving forward.

The next three meetings are scheduled for August 1, October 4, and January 10 from 3:30 to 5:30 PM.